

November 10, 2008

Mr. Mike Chrisman
Secretary for Resources
California Ocean Protection Council, Chair
California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support Ocean Protection Council Resolution to Protect West Coast Sea Turtles

Dear Secretary Chrisman and Ocean Protection Council members:

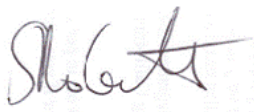
We respectfully request that you adopt the Resolution to Protect West Coast Sea Turtles [OPC Resolution], and thereby urge the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to deny consideration of an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) permit to introduce shallow-set longline fishing into the California Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

As you aware, there is a growing interest and regulatory focus within California to sustain, conserve, and protect the natural diversity and abundance of our state's ocean resources and marine life. The OPC Resolution furthers these efforts by urging NMFS to retain the current prohibition on pelagic longline fishing for swordfish off the California coast—an activity that is particularly threatening to sea turtle populations. The OPC Resolution will help ensure that fishery management on the West Coast does not jeopardize the protection of sensitive, threatened, and endangered species, including: endangered leatherback sea turtles, threatened loggerhead sea turtles, imperiled whales, dolphins, sea lions, sea birds, sharks, billfish, and other fish species.

In particular, this longline EFP poses a serious risk to two threatened or endangered sea turtle species, the Pacific leatherback and the Pacific loggerhead. Recent scientific research and satellite tracking studies confirm that the waters off the California coast are an essential foraging area for the endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtle as well as an important migratory route for the threatened Pacific loggerhead sea turtle. These turtles are at perilously low population levels, and scientists predict that the death of more than 1% of the adult female Pacific leatherback population each year could lead to its extinction. Thus, killing even small numbers of Pacific leatherback and loggerhead turtles in longline fisheries could have serious consequences for these species' survival.

Oceana is an international non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the world's oceans. On behalf of our more than 300,000 members and activists, including 30,000 in California, we respectfully request that you adopt the OPC Resolution. This resolution will support California's 30-year-old prohibition on destructive swordfish longline gear as well as safeguard sea turtles and other marine life while migrating and feeding off the coast of California.

Sincerely yours,



Santi Roberts
California Project Manager